

## EDITORIAL

### The A.M.A. Meeting

ADJOURNMENT of the 1959 Annual Session of the American Medical Association signaled the close of a meeting which should be a source of pride in accomplishment to California Physicians, to their elected leaders and to their elected representatives in the A.M.A. itself.

A Californian, Dr. E. Vincent Askey, was elected President-Elect of the A.M.A., and the philosophy of the Council of the California Medical Association was adopted by the House of Delegates of the A.M.A. in two important fields of discussion, namely, osteopathy and free choice of physician.

In the election for president-elect, the A.M.A. found itself forced to choose between two candidates of unquestioned merit and ended by voting decisively in favor of Dr. Askey, a Los Angeles surgeon who served in the C.M.A. House of Delegates, as a councilor and president of the Los Angeles County Medical Association and later in similar posts in the C.M.A. Dr. Askey also served the C.M.A. as vice-speaker and later as speaker of the House of Delegates, two posts which he later held in the A.M.A.

From the number of seconding speeches following Dr. Askey's nomination, as well as from the applause which greeted the announcement of his election, it is obvious that the leaders of American medicine are confident they have chosen a top officer who has all the talents, the capacity, the interest and the ability to represent the profession for the next two years. Vince's many friends in California wholeheartedly share this evaluation and wish him every success in his new and important duties.

On the question of free choice of physicians, the A.M.A. finally decided a question which had been held in abeyance since last December's meeting. In December it became obvious that the delegates who were called upon to vote on this knotty problem

had not had opportunity for adequate study of the many facets of the question. Accordingly, action was postponed until the June session and copies of the report of the Commission on Medical Care plans were made available to all physicians.

At the same time, the commission asked each state association to voice its thoughts on the free choice question, especially with regard to whether or not the stand-pat attitude of a flat espousal of free choice of physician should remain inflexible and unalterable.

The Council of the California Medical Association, mindful of the patient and his welfare, answered this question by asserting its belief in the right of the individual to choose or to change his physician and its support of the individual in his exercise of this right. The decision of the A.M.A. House of Delegates followed this philosophy to the letter, in the following language: "The American Medical Association believes that free choice of physician is the right of every individual and one that he should be free to exercise as he chooses. Each individual should be accorded the privilege to select and change his physician at will or to select his preferred system of medical care, and the American Medical Association vigorously supports the right of the individual to choose between these alternatives."

The House of Delegates also went on record as favoring a recommendation of the Commission on Medical Care Plans which recognized the right of the individual who receives medical care benefits as a result of collective bargaining to have "the widest possible choice from among medical care plans for the provision of such care." While this decision has drawn criticism from some quarters as knuckling under to closed-panel or other types of medical organizations, the A.M.A. decision seemed to be made as a frank recognition that

medical care today is being supplied under a variety of programs which find greater or lesser support from some segments of the population. Where the individual is given the right to select his own type of plan, the right to select a closed-panel group cannot be denied with any sense of consistency of thought.

On the matter of osteopathy, the deliberations of the House of Delegates and its reference committees made it obvious that the question hinged on whether or not more osteopaths should be produced.

One school of thought would encourage the better professional training of osteopaths through permitting doctors of medicine, ethically, to teach in osteopathic schools and thus improve the level of education of osteopaths. On the other side, a number of advocates urged that such teaching be done only in those osteopathic schools which are in process of converting themselves into recognized schools of medicine and whose graduates will be doctors of medicine who were taught by doctors of medicine, rather than doctors of osteopathy.

The latter philosophy, espoused by the California

delegation and most ably presented by two California delegates, prevailed in the A.M.A. This opens the doors for negotiations looking toward the production of additional physicians through approved medical schools in those few states, including California, where osteopathic physicians and surgeons are now being trained. Discussions of this proposal have been held in California for the past two decades and the present action of the A.M.A. should spur positive action from this point forward.

In additional actions, the A.M.A. House of Delegates again affirmed its stand against compulsory inclusion of self-employed physicians under Social Security laws and went on record as urging legislative action to eliminate cancer quackery. In both these actions the A.M.A. affirmed actions previously taken by the California Medical Association.

Neither California nor any other state has the right to claim that the A.M.A. acted upon its own provincial philosophy or urging. At the same time, it is comforting to know that the physician leaders of the country share the thinking which has developed within our own borders and that we are not left in the position of Jim, the only man in step.

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## A Win at Short Odds

FORM PLAYERS who put their hopes on California's E. Vincent Askey to become President-Elect of the American Medical Association had to accept short odds because their favorite's record of performance at any weight, in all track conditions and from any position in the field is so widely known. Heavy track or fast, front-running or closing, his record is one to give confidence.

In California we have had the opportunity, and the pleasure, of seeing him in one important post after another in his county and state medical association. We have watched him with admiration through the days of the first great struggle against state-dominated medicine in California. We have

rejoiced that his talents were recognized on the national scene of organized medicine, first in a tangible way by his election as Vice-Speaker of the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association, then as Speaker. We could not but be proud that physicians the nation over then could see him as his home-folks always saw him—able, persuasive, sagacious, fair, analytical, friendly, hard-working.

Last month Vincent Askey became President-Elect of the American Medical Association. Our pride in his election stems in little, to be sure, simply from chamber-of-commerce provincialism, but in greater measure it is born of knowledge that he is a mighty good man for the job.